Christian Community

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SOCIAL WELFARE MATERIALS READY

The period from autumn 1956 to summer of 1957 has been designated by the Division of Christian Life and Work of the National Council of Churches, in cooperation with the member denominations, as a season for the special consideration of the Church's concern in Social Welfare. This emphasis coincides very fittingly with the objective highlighted in our own denominational Program of Advance, "Every Congregation Engaged in Community Service and Social Action."

To aid our congregations, church schools, lay organizations, and social action committees in carrying forward a local program of study and action in this field, the social action bodies, social welfare agencies, and benevolent institutions of the Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed Churches have assisted in the preparation of a Social Welfare Study Packet, now available from the Commission on Christian Social Action, at a cost of one dollar. In addition to the *Message* of the National Conference on the Churches and Social Welfare and a *study guide* on The Social Ministry of the Local Church, this packet includes a *program guide* suggesting how local groups can use this material and additional publications dealing with mental health, the ministry to the aging, and other questions vital to the work of the parish.

To shed further light on a problem of grave concern to every congregation this issue of *Christian Community* reprints from *Christianity and Crisis,* Robert W. Spike's perceptive article on "The Problem of the Problem of Juvenile Delinquency." Dr. Spike, formerly pastor of Judson Memorial Church in New York City, has within the past year been made Secretary of Evangelism of the Congregational Christian Churches.

SOCIAL ACTION AGENCIES PLAN JOINT PROJECTS

The Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, anticipating the union of the two denominations in June, 1957 held a joint meeting in Cleveland, Ohio on October 31, in connection with the regular fall meetings of the two bodies.

A special feature of the meeting was a fellowship luncheon, at which greetings were brought by officers and staff members. Dr. James E. Wagner, President of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, addressing the group, commended the two agencies for their service in sharpening the Christian witness of the uniting churches and for the plans they were considering for consolidating their work following the Uniting General Synod.

Commend President

Taking note of Franco-British and Israeli military action against Egypt, the meeting sent a joint telegram to President Eisenhower:

The Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, meeting in joint session in Cleveland, Ohio, heartily commend your report to the nation, especially your strong support of the United Nations and your pledge to continue to seek peace and justice in the Middle East.

Plan Summer Institutes

It was agreed that three schools for social action would be conducted jointly during the coming summer—at Framingham, Massachusetts, at Lakeland College, Plymouth, Wisconsin, and on the Pacific Coast. Definite announcement of dates and programs will be made later. The executive committees of the respective bodies are asked to study

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Dr. James E. Wagner addresses Council for Social Action and Commission on Christian Social Action fellowship luncheon.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PROBLEM OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

By Robert W. Spike

As the minister of a church that has spent much time, money and anguish in the last four years trying to cope with teen-age problems in our neighborhood, I am concerned about the fad-like proportions that such activity may assume.

There is no question but that the rise in acts of aggressive anti-social behavior among teen-agers is serious but there is growing evidence that the public attention now drawn to the category "juvenile delinquency" also has serious consequences.

In fact, there is something ambiguous about the term that makes it misleading and thus dangerous. For one thing, it is too broad a category. Every act of adolescent behavior that offends adult mores is labelled juvenile delinquency. This extends all the way from the really critical acts of crime to school truancy and loud talking in the street. This incredible blurring of distinctions makes all problems of youth abstract, and therefore confuses the processes that must be undertaken separately and distinctively to meet the problems. Perhaps due to the over-coverage of news that radio, television, newspapers, movie newsreels, and news magazines now amass, there is a public image created by the formula "juvenile delinquency," that ranks along with "polio" and "cancer."

The disease-like connotations of the image produce two reactions in the public mind. One is, strangely enough, to dehumanize the crises that produce unrest and furnish young people with the material for really bizarre brutality. Over and over again, people say to me, "I feel guilty because I'm not doing anything about the problem of 'juvenile delinquency'." These people range from old ladies who have lost interest in the WCTU as a cause, to parents of growing children. Last spring there was the story of the family in the Bronx whose model son was mistakenly killed in a gang fight. The father was a civic leader and had been known as a fighter against "juvenile delinquency." After the tragic death of the son, the father announced that he was going to move his family back to Pennsylvania and retire from his civic leadership. For a week or more the newspapers led the city in appealing to the father not to abandon the fight. The picture was complicated by the fact that the District Attorney's office made an announcement which hinted that the son had not been so "model" after all. There was a saga-like character to the whole episode that epitomizes the stereotyped picture Americans use when dealing with tragedy.

The disease analogy also encourages people in the illusion that there are overall solutions to the problem, or at least a simple combination of cures.

War Over The Answer

The social worker, the liberals and the enlightened press for better housing, more clinics and treatment centers, more recreation facilities and more social workers. The unenlightened and the conservative urge stronger police protection, sterner judicial disposition of youth cases. In fact, a kind of warfare is being waged over the issue of "juvenile delinquency" that really has its roots in radically different areas of human nature. The social work point of view, which always is rehabilitative and optimistic in outlook, is viewed with increasing suspicion by the civic leaders who do not have social work training. For a number of years, because social workers were specialists, they were held in awe by the elected official and first citizens. As anxiety mounts in city after city, long suppressed hostilities against "permissiveness" and "retraining" appear. Judges like Samuel Liebowitz make public statements condemning the coddling of young people. The know-nothing press whets the appetite of the frightened public by doing sensational exposes of social work oriented public institutions[1] and modern educational techniques in the public schools. A New York tabloid recently carried this caption under a picture of a man on a stretcher on his way to the hospital: "Schoolteacher beaten by student could not defend himself because of 'loving care' theory in school."

Veteran social workers have generally been reluctant to get in the debate to challenge the "spare the rod, spoil the child" school of public policy. Recently, however, at the Law Enforcement Institue on Youth and Crime, held in Syracuse, New York, Dr. Ralph M. Brancole, director of New Jersey's diagnostic center at Menlo Park, sounded a warning. He urged the group not to underestimate the high incidence of mental and emotional disturbance found among delinquents. "While not every delinquent is psychopathic," he said, "it is the major task of enforcement officials and psychiatrists to isolate the deeply disturbed youngster and provide him with clinical treatment."

"The more neurotic a youngster, the less he will benefit from sanctions," Dr. Brancole declared. He added that many offenders, in fact, deliberately sought punishment in order to satisfy their hostility toward society[2].

It is also true that the forces generally represented as being social work oriented have been guilty of oversimplifications in the past. A too facile prescription for society's ills is expressed in programs and plans to upgrade the environment of the city. New housing, better schools, and the like are certainly desperately needed, and there is of course a strong correlation between underprivilege and anti-social behavior. And yet the problem is more a product of subtle combinations of personality structures, the breakdown of supporting heritage *and* these obvious environmental cancers. An appreciation of the depth of the cultural crisis is the necessary context in which to understand and deal with all the variety of human maladjustment summed up by the term, "juvenile delinquency."

The more astute social workers can no longer be accused of naivete about human relations, due largely to the growing influence of psychiatric social work. Graduates of the better schools of social work no longer apply techniques, either group work or case work, like mustard plasters. They no longer have a social millenialist point of view.

[1] *New York World Telegram* in April, 1955, printed two articles attacking Riverside Hospital, the only hospital for teen-age drug users in the United States.

[2] *New York Times*, July 7, 1955, p. 29

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The Problem of the Problem of Juvenile Delinquency

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Most still seem to be very confused about what metaphysical context they are operating in. In most cases it seems to be a kind of cultural anthropology with ingraftings of a cooperative democratic ethic. Christian forces do much better, however, to give their support to such people, when the alternative is a kind of belligerent punishment. The problems of law enforcement as a part of a just society can be discussed and worked out in such a context, but mercy and compassion cannot be held in company with a rigid line of thinking that sees only retribution as a solution to youth's problems.

Recreation is not Enough

Between those who would apply a kind of societal analgesic to the problem and the wielders of the police billy club is the larger number of the public. This group is tempted a little bit in both directions but settles safely on recreation and more recreation as a cure-all.

This solution obviously arises from the diagnosis that what is wrong with our youth is simply improper use of leisure time. Boys will be boys, and if we supply enough settlement houses, playgrounds, little leagues, camping trips and arts and crafts, everything will be all right. It would be foolish to discredit the real truth that lies in the need for constructive alternatives for adolescent interest; and yet to misread the anxious, neurotic drives for daring action that underlie gang murders or drug addiction in terms of needs for hobbies is to fool ourselves. The meaning of life itself is at issue for many boys, as they deliberately involve themselves in criminal activity. Although they cannot generally articulate it, most boys know the consequences of things like drug use, and yet see no other compelling force in their lives that offers them as much emotional satisfaction. At the risk of overdramatizing, drug use is often a sacrament of the meaninglessness of life.

Large sums of money are now being made available for youth recreation. We must be ready for the disillusionment that will set in when it becomes apparent that all the fine gym equipment in the world does not do the trick. Only the gift of love that is sometimes incorporated in the lives of personnel in the gyms and clubs will be of benefit. And, as Bettelheim[3] is continually pointing out to us, "love" is not enough. The restructuring of the values of American life that is now in process is directly involved, and we must expect a long siege of noticeable adolescent unrest for years to come (particularly when we keep telling adolescents that they are supposed to be difficult.)

In many communities, young people need friendship and counsel on the part of pastors and understanding church people, like the teen-age girl in the above scene, taken from "City Story," a film produced by the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches.

Exploiting the Problem

There is room only to mention one other aspect of the new configuration "juvenile delinquency." That is the way so many interests and institutions use it as a front for other purposes. Both liberal and reactionary organizations use the threat of juvenile delinquency as part of the package of reasons why they should be supported. As we have pointed out, this is related to a conflict going on in American life as to a basic interpretation of human nature. Super-patriotic organizations and conservative veterans' groups sponsor recreational programs and citizens' participation drills (like Boys' State, etc.) and so request public support for the total organization. Liberal organizations urge the passage of local government reform bills and social legislation in the name of the magic formula.

Politicians have been very conscious of how sensitized people are to the issue, and it has become increasingly a larger factor in political platforms and speech making. In fact, following last year's election, Governor Harriman of New York State, and his Republican Attorney General, Jacob Javits, found themselves in a very undignified scrap over which one was going to lead the fight against delinquency in the state.

Even religious organizations find it the most appealing touchstone of public interest. Catholic parochial schools have stressed heavily the role of religious experience in the education process as being combative of the Formless Ogre. Even the Protestant Council of the City of New York, in its fund raising campaign this year, found it necessary to cite its great effectiveness in combatting juvenile delinquency (vocational and rehabilitative schools, chaplains in youth institutions, etc.)

The problems is not that there has been an exaggeration of the disturbance and rootlessness that prevails among our youth, but that it has been caricatured out of reality by a public bug-a-boo.

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[3] Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, connected with the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago, author of *Love Is Not Enough*, Glencoe Free Press, 1950, and *Truants From Life* (The rehabilitation of emotionally disturbed children), Glencoe Free Press, 1955.

GENERAL SYNOD RESOLUTIONS READY

Christian Social Action at the General Synod is the title of the latest Christian Social Action Handbook, containing the resolutions on social problems adopted at the 1956 session of the General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

A copy is being mailed to every pastor and to the chairman of every local church social action committee, so far as the latter are registered with the Commission.

We believe, however, that these statements—on international affairs, on race relations, on citizenship, and on other concerns—are of vital interest not only to pastors and committee chairmen. They should be required (or self-imposed) homework for every consistory or church council member, every church school teacher or officer, every leader in the Women's Guild, Churchmen's Brotherhood, or Youth Fellowship, indeed every lay man or woman who seeks to be an informed, responsible churchman.

Copies may be secured at 20 cents each, or $15 per hundred, from the office of the Commission.

Actions of earlier General Synods may be ordered under the following titles:

Social Pronouncements of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, (1934-1947), 15c

General Synod Looks at Social Issues (1950), 15c

Our Social Witness, (1953), 20c

Any individual or group wishing to secure all four handbooks, covering all the major pronouncements of our General Synod from 1934 to 1956, may secure the set for 60 cents.

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A Prayer For Refugees

Gedge Harmon

Eternal God, whose Son, born in a cattle stall, was himself a refugee from tyranny and violence, a stranger in a strange land, we who cherish the memory of his birth and the hope of his Kingdom, remember before Thee our brethren who are refugees, outcasts, and strangers. In Thy love sustain those who seek to escape from persecution and destruction, who pray for liberation from oppression, or amid the squalor of their camps await the promise of a home. Inspire us, who have so much, to joyful giving for those who need so much. Guide the nations and their representatives to wise action that their suffering may be relieved, their faith renewed, their hope restored, so that they may have joy in useful labor for the common good. For the sake of Christ Jesus Thy Son. Amen.

TO RECONSIDER IMMIGRATION ACT

In one of the closing sessions of the Eighty-fourth Congress Francis E. Walter, Congressman from Pnnsylvania, stated that he will introduce an amendment to the Walter-McCarran Act early in the next session of Congress. He also said that he will welcome testimony from individuals and groups who want to see some changes made in this much debated immigration law.

We do not know what changes Congressman Walter will propose, but we do think this statement should meet with a big response from church groups who have seen a number of weaknesses and injustices in the Walter-McCarran Act. In this connection we suggest that members of Evangelical and Reformed Church reacquaint themselves with the stand taken on this measure by the General Synod in 1953.

The General Synod, mindful of our nation's heritage as a refuge for the aspiring and oppressed of all lands, calls upon the Congress of the United States to revise the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (Public Law 414) so as: (a) to permit a more flexible use of unfilled quotas by refugees from tyranny, disaster, and poverty; (b) to eliminate such racist restrictions as charge persons of Asiatic ancestry against the quota of their ancestor's coutry rather than their own; and (c) to provide for a system of fair hearings and appeals which will protect both the immigrant and the naturalized citizen from the arbitrary power of officials to refuse a visa or carry out deportation proceedings.

Plan Joint Projects

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publications, future training institutes, and other cooperative projects.

In a separate session, the Commission voted to bring synodical social action committee chairmen to the nearest of these summer schools, in lieu of holding a national conference for these chairmen.

Announce Conference in Ohio

Robert D. Smink, chairman of the Commission's Committee on Religion and Public Education, announced that plans have been made for a Conference on Religion and Public Education in Ohio. The conference will be held at the Mansfield-Leland Hotel, Mansfield, Ohio, February 22 and 23, 1957. Chairmen of the social action committees of the four synods in Ohio have recommended that a maximum of 75, inclusive of public school administrators and teaching personnel, should be invited. Representatives of the Ohio Conference of Congregational Christian Churches agreed to cooperate in choosing a number of delegates.